



MURRAY CITY MUNICIPAL COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

The Murray City Municipal Council met as a Committee of the Whole on Tuesday, September 1st, 2015, in the Murray City Center, Conference Room #107, 5025 South State Street, Murray Utah.

Council Members in Attendance:

Blair Camp, Chair	Council Member, District #2
Diane Turner, Vice-Chair	Council Member, District #4
Dave Nicponski	Council Member, District #1
Brett Hales	Council Member, District #5

Excused:

Jim Brass	Council Member, District #3
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Others in Attendance:

Ted Eyre	Mayor	Janet Towers	Exec. Asst. to the Mayor
Janet M. Lopez	Council Administrator	Tim Tingey	ADS Director
Jennifer Kennedy	Recorder	Frank Nakamura	Attorney
Jan Wells	Chief Administrative Officer	Kellie Challburg	Council Office
John Inch Morgan	VECC	Craig Burnett	Police Chief
Scott Bartlett	City Journals		

Chairman Camp called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order and welcomed those in attendance. He stated that Mr. Brass was not present.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Camp asked for approval on the minutes from the Committee of the Whole on August 4, 2015. Ms. Turner moved approval. Mr. Hales seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Business Item #1

**Update on Valley Emergency
Communications Center (VECC) - Blair
Camp and John Morgan**

Chairman Camp introduced Mr. Morgan, the Executive Director of VECC. Mr. Morgan is a veteran of local government and was a City Administrator with Taylorsville for 17 years, and has been with VECC for a year and a half. Chairman Camp noted that he has been very impressed with the job that Mr. Morgan has done at VECC. It is an interesting time at VECC with the merger with the Sheriff's department and the RFP (Request for Proposal) for a new CAD (Computer Aided Dispatch) system. He noted that Mr. Morgan has stepped up to the current challenges.

Mr. Morgan worked in government for fifteen years prior to his position in Taylorsville. He started in public safety for Salt Lake County and was recruited by the Salt Lake County Commission to manage the public safety portfolio and act as the liaison.

Mr. Morgan was asked by several City Managers to consider this position and attempt to make significant changes to VECC. One significant change would be to bring everyone in the valley to the same mindset. He emphasized the changing technology that is happening around us, for example, cell phones. Cell phones have changed the response to emergency situations. When cell phones were not as prevalent, land lines were used to feed in to the 911 centers and jurisdictions and addresses were easily known. Cell phone calls come from anywhere and bounce off different towers. The PSAP (Public Safety Answering Point) that gets the call may not be the same one that responds and would require transfers, which is not the best way to respond to emergencies.

Mr. Morgan showed a photo of the original PSAP for the valley that was located in Murray City Hall. In 2001 the facilities were expanded to allow more groups to join. There are currently two primary PSAPs in the valley that receive 911 calls: Salt Lake City and VECC. There are a number of secondary PSAP's that dispatch for their agencies. Unified Police Department is an example of a secondary PSAP. When a 911 call comes into either VECC or Salt Lake City, it is then transferred to UPD, or another secondary PSAP so they can dispatch their officers.

He noted that a person calling 911 does not want to be put on hold and transferred. It causes a delay in response time, as well as the risk of the call being dropped. This is one element that they are trying to correct with the revision.

Murray was one of the original members of VECC when an interlocal agreement was established stating that all 911 calls, with the exception of Salt Lake City, would go to VECC, and then be dispatched. There are two areas that VECC does not dispatch calls for and they are Salt Lake City and Sandy. The goal is to have a functional consolidation in the Salt Lake Valley, which means everyone is abiding by the same policies and practices. He showed a chart of the different law enforcement and fire agencies that VECC dispatches for.

Call takers at VECC answer an average of 1,710 calls for emergency services every day. Some of those calls are administrative calls, and some are emergency calls. For an example, some calls are medical priorities versus calls giving case information to an officer. They are attempting to triage the calls depending on their priority, and have an

administrative dispatcher take the lower priority calls. Therefore, allowing the 911 dispatchers that are medically trained available to take the true emergency calls. Dispatchers send an average of 2,200 police, fire and medical calls each day. Typically, 87% of the calls are police calls, and 13% are fire and medical calls.

In 2014, Murray had 49,311 total calls, most of those were calls for the police.

Mr. Morgan noted that his background is in quantitative analysis. He has a degree in economics and loves to crunch numbers. He has been doing statistical analysis at VECC.

When a person calls 911, they want that call to be answered immediately, and that doesn't always happen. The abundance of cell phones complicates the matter. He used the fire in Cottonwood Heights as an example, and said they received 60 calls informing them of the fire. The number of incoming calls all happening simultaneously, 60 for example, creates havoc at a dispatch center. If the center is sufficiently staffed on a quantitative basis to answer the average calls but then gets inundated with calls, there are some calls that won't be answered immediately. He has developed some policies regarding duplicate calls, but there would still be calls going into the queue.

The majority of calls are answered within ten seconds, but there are times that the ten second criteria is not met. The only way to reduce that number to zero, would be to have the center staffed with people just waiting to answer calls. The busiest times are from 3:00 pm to 11:00 pm, and the center is staffed accordingly.

He noted that there are very few times that a person waits more than 40 seconds to have their call answered, but knows that is not acceptable.

Public education has helped a little to inform people that calling 911 for non-emergencies may delay a response to a true emergency call. He said often that six people will call on the same car accident, knowing that the other five people are calling also, not realizing that it will prevent all the calls from being answered timely.

Policy states that there is an obligation to call back twice on an abandoned call. The call could be a domestic abuse call; the abuser has come back into the room, and the victim has had to hang up. Abandoned calls always require a follow up call.

VECC has a Board of Trustees, with a representative from each member city. The Board of Trustees approves the budget and the major policies. There is also a Board of Operations, primarily made up of Police Chiefs and Fire Chiefs. Their job is to look at the functional organization of VECC in developing policies. There is an Advisory Group made up of Police, Fire, and Technical Services. The goal is for all three of these groups to work together. They look at every detail and try to find common ground in responding to issues and problems. For example, the problem of missing children leaving one jurisdiction and getting lost in another jurisdiction. The goal is to find that common ground that best serves everyone.

Employed at VECC are 101 tele-communicators, 14 operation supervisors, and 13 administrative or technical employees. He noted that the technical staff is important, and everything from the first call is computerized. All the important information is displayed immediately on the screen, including address, suspect information and the description of

the call. Both the computer system and the phone line that ties into the computer are critical elements.

The requirements to be a dispatcher include the absence of a criminal record, no drug use, and a minimum age of 18. There is a very high turnover rate in this profession. Most PSAP's nationwide have a 20% turnover rate. VECC is currently at an 18% turnover but has been as high as 30%. There are huge costs to hire and train new employees. He estimates that it is about a \$50,000 cost to train a new employee. He said 400 hours of training are required before they are able to answer calls. The training includes CPR (Cardio pulmonary resuscitation) training, EMD (Emergency medical dispatching), POST (Police officer standard training) and BCI (Bureau of criminal investigation). Ms. Turner asked if the employees are POST certified. He replied that it is not the same level of certification as the police officers, but they have a dispatcher communication training. The employees handle criminal records and run driver license checks so they need to have POST certification.

Mr. Nicponski asked Chief Burnett how much it costs to train a new police officer. Chief Burnett replied that between salary and benefits, he would estimate \$70,000 to \$80,000.

Mr. Morgan played a sample 911 call. The call involved a woman having a baby and the employee talked her through the successful delivery of a baby.

He stated that the call taker never knows what will be on the other end of a call and they have to be trained in all disciplines. That is one reason for the POST requirement to learn police operations procedures. A call taker can then progress to a police or fire dispatcher with an additional 480 hours of training. Employees are required to do 36 hours per year of continuing education for each discipline.

Employees are required to be involved in inter-agency cooperation. In many cases, there isn't enough capacity or finances for one agency to do everything on their own, and they have to depend on other agencies. Employees have to know the geographical areas and which police agencies would be involved.

Mr. Nicponski asked what CART stood for. Mr. Morgan and Chief Burnett said it is the response for a missing child. (Child Abduction Response Team)

Mr. Nicponski asked what the average salary was for VECC employees. Mr. Morgan replied employees start at \$15.14 per hour, ranging up to approximately \$22.00 per hour. He noted that there is a stress factor for the call takers and they should be compensated for that kind of work, similar to hazard pay. He said most of the employees that have stuck around have a passion for their work. He commented that 911 employees have to do their job correctly so the response team gets on their way. He is trying to recreate VECC into an organization that has a high professional standard and is an integral part of the team.

Mr. Morgan noted that it is a professional skill to be able to engage whomever is on the other end of the line. It could be a frantic mother, a very serious person, or the rescue professionals.

Medical teams roll out once the pertinent information has been received, even though the 911 employee is still on the phone continuing the interrogation. The call taker enters

in the data and then sends it electronically across the room to either a police or fire dispatcher. The dispatcher then communicates by radio and through the computer to an available unit. Once the nature and location of the emergency is determined, the system will populate what kind of equipment and personnel to send. The police dispatcher will also know the location of the units and can call on the closest responder.

Ms. Turner asked what could be done to increase the starting salary. Mr. Morgan responded that there have been two recent increases and are now “testing the water” with other dispatch centers. They are on about equal pay with neighboring dispatch centers. Ms. Turner noted that there should be a formula that considers the training cost and turnover rate with the rate of pay.

Mr. Morgan said the recruitment has changed and future employees are being tested with some of the worst case calls to see if they can handle the stress. They are also recruiting year round instead of twice a year, and anticipating some turnovers.

Mr. Hales asked if the council members could tour the VECC center. Mr. Morgan replied that they could.

Mr. Nicponski asked if the funding structure was contractual with each city or agency or from property taxes. Mr. Morgan replied that there were a couple of different funding sources. By way of an interlocal agreement, each agency agreed upon an assessment based on the call volume. The annual expenses are divided by the number of calls to get the approximate cost per call. Also, each contracted city receives 911 dollars from taxes and the cities convey 100% of that to VECC. VECC also receives some specific grant money.

The merger is complete from a legal standpoint, stated Mr. Morgan. UPD (Unified Police Department) is officially part of VECC. The agreement stated that the budgets would be separate for two years. The physical merger will not take place until the final CAD decision has been made, because it would be too difficult to have two different systems running out of the same building.

The CAD process has been in progress for most of this year. An RFP was sent out and six different vendors responded. The selection was narrowed to four vendors, who made presentations to over 70 participants, including police officers, fire fighters and IT professionals. The goal is to select a CAD system that will last for at least fifteen years. The current system doesn't work as well for the fire fighters as it does for the police officers. The selection was then narrowed down to two vendors, and research is being done on both vendors. The plan is to have a CAD system selected by the end of the month, and a signed contract by the end of October. The County has allocated \$1.4 million to assist with the CAD purchase, and he would like to encumber the funds before the end of the County's fiscal year.

The remaining two selected vendors are both excellent and do a great job keeping track of officers and dispatching. The unanimous assessment was that both of these systems are much better than what is currently in place.

He was asked to try and bring everyone in the valley together, including Salt Lake City. He noted that Salt Lake City is attending all the meetings and everyone is working together to find the best solution.

Chairman Camp asked if there were any more questions. He pointed out to Mr. Morgan that the conference room at Murray City is still called the VECC room due to the history. Chairman Camp stated that he would like to set up a time for him and the others to tour the VECC center. Mr. Morgan replied that would be great and they also give tours for children's groups to teach them important facts about calling 911. He said he would be happy to host the Council on a tour.

Announcements

Ms. Lopez stated that September 14th would be the annual open house at the Heritage Center, in conjunction with National Senior Center Month. Dinner would be served from 5:00-7:00 followed by a band. Reservations are needed and the cost is \$6.00 per person.

She reminded the Council that the office would be closed on Labor Day, September 7th.

Chairman Camp adjourned the meeting.

Kellie Challburg
Council Office Administrator